

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CHAIRMAN YI CHECKS CHALLENGERS IN NDP POWER STRUGGLE

REF: (A) SEOUL 2405 (DTG 241011Z MAR 78);
(B) SEOUL 1450 (DTG 220735Z FEB 78)

SUMMARY: NDP CHAIRMAN YI CH'OL-SUNG DEALT A SETBACK TO PARTY
DISSIDENTS WHO HAD PETITIONED FOR A CONVENTION IN 1978,
THEREBY ALSO DISPOSING OF LATEST CHALLENGE TO HIS "MIDDLE-
OF-THE-ROAD" LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY. END SUMMARY

1. REFTELS REPORTED EFFORTS BY SOME IN OPPOSITION NEW
DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) TO CHALLENGE CHAIRMAN YI CH'OL-SUNG'S
CONTROL OVER PARTY THROUGH CALL FOR SPECIAL CONVENTION. YAT'U
(ASSOCIATION TO STRUGGLE FOR RESTORATION OF A TRUE OPPOSITION
PARTY) SOUGHT A CONVENTION A) TO NOMINATE NDP CANDIDATE AND
B) TO ATTEMPT TO OUST YI FROM PARTY LEADERSHIP. KIM YONG-SAM
AND HIS FOLLOWERS JOINED YAT'U IN CALLING FOR CONVENTION TO
NOMINATE AN NDP CANDIDATE (KIM HIMSELF) BUT WERE A BIT MORE
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EQUIVOCAL ON DIRECTLY CHALLENGING CURRENT NDP LEADERSHIP
APPARATUS. THUS KIM YONG-SAM AND YAT'U WERE JOINED IN
THE EFFORT TO FORCE A CONVENTION, BUT THE FUNDAMENTAL
DIFFERENCE IN THEIR GOALS CONSISTENTLY PREVENTED AGREEMENT
ON STRATEGY.

2. THE TWO GROUPS EFFORTS FOR A CONVENTION WENT

THROUGH MANY STAGES BUT, IN THE SIX WEEKS SINCE BEGINNING FORMAL ACTIVITIES WITH THE SUBMISSION OF THEIR PETITION MARCH 15 (REFTEL A), THE DISSIDENT FORCES HAVE LOST A SERIES OF ENCOUNTERS. YI'S RESPONSE TO YAT'U'S PETITION WAS TO HAVE THE NDP SECRETARIAT CONFIRM THE VALIDITY OF SIGNATURES, A MANEUVER WHICH EVENTUALLY PROVIDED THE PUBLIC RATIONALE FOR PARTY'S REJECTION OF PETITION, ON GROUNDS OF "DEFECTS" IN SIGNATURES. AT THE APRIL 6 MEETING OF THE NDP'S POLITICAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (PAC), ONLY FOUR OF THE 24 PRESENT SUPPORTED A CONVENTION, AND THE PAC RESOLVED TO PASS THE DECISION TO THE PARTY'S SIX-MAN SUPREME COMMITTEE (SC). CHAIRMAN YI CH'OL-SUNG CONVENED THE SC ON APRIL 11 AND RAISED THE SUGGESTION OF REFERRING LEADING MEMBERS OF YAT'U TO THE PARTY'S DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE (DC), BUT WAS PERSUADED TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE WITH YAT'U FOR ANOTHER WEEK. FINALLY, ON APRIL 17, THE SUPREME COMMITTEEMEN MET A SECOND TIME AND, JOINTLY WITH CONVENTION CHAIRMAN CHONG HON-CHU, FORMALLY RESOLVED NOT TO HOLD A PARTY CONVENTION, ON GROUNDS THAT "DEFICIENCIES" FOUND IN 138 OF THE SIGNATURES MEANT YAT'U'S PETITION WAS INVALID. SUBSEQUENTLY, A SIX-MAN SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE (DC) HAS BEEN INVESTIGATING THE ACTIVITIES OF LEADING YAT'U MEMBERS, AND ON APRIL 27 THE FULL DC VOTED TO EXPEL TWELVE YAT'U LEADERS FROM THE NDP.

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3. YAT'U HAS MADE VALIANT EFFORTS TO FIGHT BACK AT EVERY STAGE, RELEASING A STRING OF STATEMENTS CRITICIZING EACH STEP OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. ON APRIL 7, THE DAY AFTER THE PAC MEETING, YAT'U RESOLVED TO TAKE ACTION TO FORCE A CONVENTION BY FORMING YAT'U CHAPTERS WITHIN THE ELECTION DISTRICTS OF SIX OF THE ASSEMBLYMEN MOST CONSPICUOUSLY OPPOSED TO YAT'U (YI CH'UNG-HWAN, YU CH'I-SONG, YI KI-T'AEK, PAK IL, KIM SU-HAN, AND PAK HAE-CH'UNG) TO THREATEN THEIR RE-ELECTION TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. AS ITS FIRST MOVE, YAT'U SCHEDULED A RALLY FOR APRIL 14 IN CHINJU (ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CONVENTION CHAIRMAN CHONG), BUT THEY WERE BLOCKED WHEN YI SENT SUPPORTERS FROM SEOUL TO OCCUPY THE NDP OFFICES THERE, THUS PREVENTING THEIR USE BY YAT'U. THIS RALLY SUCCEEDED IN MAKING CHAIRMAN CHONG CLEARLY ANTI-YAT'U AND CAUSED A WAVE OF MUTUAL RECRIMINATION BETWEEN PRO-YAT'U AND ANTI-YAT'U ASSEMBLYMEN. APRIL 15 MEETING BETWEEN YAT'U MEMBERS AND ASSEMBLYMEN SUPPORTING CONVENTION, INCLUDING KIM YONG-SAM, DID PRODUCE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT YAT'U WOULD ALSO USE DC, ASKING IT TO PUNISH PARTY LEADERS FOR THEIR FAILURE TO HOLD A CONVENTION. DC RECEIVED YAT'U'S FORMAL COMPLAINT ON APRIL 22. (IN HISTORY OF NDP,

NO SUCH REQUEST FOR CENSURE OF PARTY LEADERS HAD EVER BEEN SUBMITTED.) YAT'U ALSO RESOLVED TO FILE A CIVIL SUIT DEMANDING SUSPENSION OF YI AND CHONG FOR VIOLATING PARTY CONSTITUTION BUT, AS OF APRIL 27, NO SUCH SUIT HAD IN FACT BEEN FILED.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH YAT'U AND NDP MINORITY FACTION LED BY KIM YONG-SAM HAVE DONE ALL THEY COULD TO PROTEST CHAIRMAN YI'S DECISION NOT TO NAME AN NDP CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT THIS YEAR, AND TO CHALLENGE YI'S PARTY LEADERSHIP, AT EVERY TURN YI HAS SHOWN HIMSELF IN CONTROL OF THE PARTY APPARATUS. SOME EXODUS FROM NDP OF FRUSTRATED YAT'U PARTISANS CAN BE EXPECTED, ALTHOUGH YI CH'OL-SUNG TOLD EMBOFF HE BELIEVED IMPACT ON PARTY WOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INSIGNIFICANT. SOME NDP MEMBERS WHO QUESTIONED WISDOM OF HOLDING CONVENTION ARE NOT HAPPY WITH YI'S UNCOMROMISING LINE ON HANDLING ISSUE, WHICH ALLOWED YAT'U NO FACE-SAVING RETREAT.
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